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P 150855Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6304
INFO RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS PRIORITY 1513
RUEHJO/AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG 0059
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0379
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0423
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0380
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RULSDMK/DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHDC

UNCLAS ABUJA 001058

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT PASS TO USTDA-MARIN; EXIM-RICHTER
DEPT PASS USAID AFR/SD FOR CURTIS AND ATWOOD
JOHANNESBURG FOR USTDA-NAGY
BAGHDAD FOR MCCULLOUGH
ROME PASS TO TSA - ANTHONY GIOVANNIELLO
DAKAR PASS TO FAA - MOIRA KEANE
DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR FAA MCINTRON, AHARRIS
DOC FOR 3317/ITA/OA/KBURRESS AND 3130/USFC/OIO/ANESA/MCREED

E.O. 12598: N/A

TAGS: [EAIR](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [ASEC](#) [ERTD](#) [EINV](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: DELTA NEW YORK-ABUJA ROUTE LAUNCHES WITH THE
TOUCHDOWN IN ABUJA OF FLIGHT 216

REF: A. Abuja 596
[1](#)B. ABUJA 592
[1](#)B. ABUJA 456
[1](#)C. ABUJA 361

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED -PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. Delta flight 215 touched down at Abuja Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport June 11 at 12:13 p.m., currently the only U.S. flag carrier to fly direct from the U.S. to Nigeria's capital city Abuja. The plane was met by a full staff of ground crews and customer service staff to aid the passengers; but devoid of any ceremony or fanfare. Delta chose to underplay the event due to the security issues that caused the last minute cancelation of its Nairobi and Monrovia routes. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Delta flight 216 from New York to Abuja made a picture-perfect soft touchdown at Abuja Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport on June 11 at 12:13 pm. The Boeing 757 plane was met by Delta ground and customer service crews, making sure the passengers received the best possible customer service as they deplaned and collected their luggage; but the arrival was devoid of any ceremonial fanfare. Delta is sensitive regarding the last minute cancellation of two African routes the first week of June and the large ceremony that had to be cancelled in Nairobi, Kenya.

[1](#)3. (U) Delta held a press conference at the Abuja Sheraton hotel at 2:00 pm on June 11 to make formal announcements. The direct flight between New York's John F. Kennedy International airport (JFK) and Abuja International airport has begun with service twice weekly and moves to three times weekly effective July 1. It is the only direct service from the capital city to the United States. The new route offers passengers more than 45 connections to destinations such as Washington DC, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Houston, Boston and Chicago.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The day concluded with an evening meeting held for ticket and travel agents to discuss Delta's plans for the New York-Abuja route. Delta Commercial Manager for East and West Africa Robert Bryan shared with EconOff on June 11 that Delta is experiencing significant reservation cancellations since the Atlanta and Nairobi, Kenya and the Atlanta-Monrovia, Liberia routes were cancelled due to security issues. On the Abuja routes, Delta is flying a Boeing 757-200 ETOPS aircraft with 174 seats; 16 in business class and 158

in economy. The flight departs Abuja at 10:15p.m. and arrives into New York-JFK at 6:45 a.m. For the return trip, the flight departs New York at 3:50 p.m. and arrives into Abuja at 10:30 a.m. the following day. Both flights operate via Dakar, Senegal.

¶3. (SBU) Comment. The Mission is proud to see this direct flight begin and will continue to work with the Abuja airport authorities, Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority, and Transportation Security Administration, and U.S. Federal Aviation Administration on safety and security issues. Nigerian airline carriers are eager to fly to the U.S. and Nigeria continues its quest to attain a Category 1 rating from the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration. End Comment.

¶4. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.

SANDERS